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278 [563] The Chinese druggists, many of whom stocked among their traditional pharmacopeia a few modern medications, gave out occasionally to their customers information derived from the manufacturer's instructions for use. People with minor indispositions sometimes sought a druggist's advice. He suggested traditional or modern remedies, depending on the wishes of the customer. Thus, the druggists also acted as a bridge to the use of modern remedies.

484 Facets of Social Life Pertinent to Childbearing:

Communication and Transportation

People went to Minburī, and less often to Bangkok, to buy, sell, work, or visit relatives. A few adults had never been outside Bang Chan.

494 [484] [206] [493] Along the road buses passed Bang Chan every two or three hours during the daytime only. Minburī was a ten minute ride, Bangkok, an hour. Minburī had no taxis, and no telephones existed to call a taxi from Bangkok. Two or three persons owned bicycles.

505 484 Within Bang Chan, transportation varied with the season. From June to February travel was entirely by boat, even to a neighbor. A message to a local midwife, for instance, could be carried quickly by a speedy paddler in his skiff. If an emergency trip to the Minburī Health Center appeared necessary, a person could be rowed fairly comfortably along the canal that bordered the road. Going by boat to Bangkok, a whole day's row away, or four hours by the motor boat from Minburī, was not considered convenient even for passenger traffic, much less for a sick person or a woman in labor.

484 844 [494] The inconvenient time of year was the three month dry season. Boats then could hardly go on the canal that ran through the middle of Bang Chan, while the smaller canals became muddy or even dry. Walking barefoot over sharp stubble in tropical sun was hard. To transport a woman in labor, assuming she could stand it, an improvised stretcher could be made, but to subject her to the jolting bus was usually foolhardy. It was not customary to flag down passing cars. If things went wrong for a woman in labor during the hot, dry season, there was practically no chance of getting her to a hospital, and none of getting modern help to her.

243 433 Work Habits in the Economy

Because of the annual flood the land was admirably suited to growing a single bounteous crop of rice. After all needs for

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132 Bangkok. The tropical monsoon climate divides the year into three seasons, a hot, wet season from late May to November, a cooler, dry season from December to early February, and a hot, 361 dry season from late February to mid-May. The community, scattered over an area of approximately five square miles, was 161 composed of seven neighboring hamlets. In 1954, the population 162 was approximately 1700, divided among 336 households. About 60 per cent of the households were made up of independent families, parents with unmarried children, with an average family [145] size of 5.7 persons. The main occupation of 80 per cent of all families was rice farming.

243 The climate together with the overflowing Chao Phraya [13] river, provided natural conditions for raising a single crop [220] of wet rice. From May or June to February, the principal activities were those connected with rice production. This crop greatly exceeded the needs for local consumption as human food, [435] feed, and seed. The surplus of rice which was sold, was estimated for 1953 as 1.4 times the amount used for all purposes within the village (Janlekha, 1955).

346 Wat Bang Chan, the Buddhist monastery and place for re- 621 ligious exercises, was also the center of social life in the [795] community. When data for this study were being gathered, the one primary school in the village was located on the grounds of the wat. The community was defined simply by the clientele which patronized Wat Bang Chan and this elementary school. [565] Within the area of the community lived a small minority of Thai Moslems who patronized a mosque and school just outside Bang Chan. The few Chinese in the village were considered as part of the Thai-Buddhist community. Information to be presented [128] on food habits refers primarily to habits of the Buddhist majority, although some reference will be made to ways in which Moslem practices differed therefrom.

193 Although for six or more months of the year the fields 243 were covered with water, sometimes to a depth of a meter or 481 more, a year-round road, connecting Bangkok and Minburi, the nearest market town, ran through one edge of the village. Bus 484 service was available along this road, to either Bangkok or [494] Minburi but within the community one went by boat on the network of canals during the wet season, and during the dry season, [501] on foot along the dikes or across fields. From late January through May, when subsidiary canals were apt to be dry, getting about was somewhat difficult. Boat travel was considered easy, but as many families had only one boat, a trip to the store or even to a neighbor's home had to be planned with reference to the activities of other family members.

443 Large scale purchases, as for a ceremony, were always made at a big market, but in general, instead of people going to the market-town, the "market" came to the people. Boat-venders brought not only fresh produce and staples but also sweets, ices, soft drinks, and cooked foods such as Chinese

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

Houses in the village vary considerably in appearance: from the bamboo and thatch dwellings of the poorest families to the sturdy, great gabled houses of teak built by Bang Chan's original settlers to the tiled and corrugated iron-roofed homes of the newly rich. Most, however, follow the traditional Siamese pattern of being built on posts two to ten feet off the ground, mainly as a protection against flood waters. Many homes in Bang Chan give the impression of being permanently unfinished, the bamboo houses because they require constant refurbishment, the wooden dwellings because they are made of teak which seasons best when left untreated and exposed directly to the elements. The merging upper-class urban pattern of painting teakwood has not yet reached Bang Chan.

The major thoroughfare of the community, bisecting it in a north-south direction and perpendicular to the Bangkok-Minburi highway, is Khlong (or Canal) Bang Chan, which links with Khlong Saen Saeb three kilometers south of the village. The latter, dug in the 1840's and originally intended as a military route to the Cambodian frontier, is one of several major canals dug during the mid-nineteenth century as part of the vast canal system that was constructed in the Central Plain when the region was opened for commercial rice production. Together with the highway built since World War II, a one-hour bus ride to the capital, Khlong Saen Saeb, provides the villagers with their major access to Bangkok and the rest of the Central Plain. By motorboat a trip to Bangkok via this large, bustling canal takes approximately three hours.

Despite these relatively good communications facilities and the long-standing Thai peasant tradition to *paj thiaw* ("to go around"—for fun, on visits, pilgrimages, often for long distances) few people outside the immediate vicinity of the village have ever heard of Bang Chan. The community is neither a landmark nor is it located near one; it is not famed for any activities (other than having become the research site for the "American professors"); and because it is not a spatially integrated village, Bang Chan cannot even be found on any map of Thailand. Like most Thai settlements, Bang Chan has a Buddhist monastery and a government elementary school. It is these two structures that give the village its identity and the local people a sense of belonging to a community. People say that they live "at home in Bang Chan" because they make their merit at the monastery of Bang Chan and send their children to the Bang Chan school. Approximately five square miles in size and inhabited by 1,771 people living in 296 households (1956 village census), Bang Chan seems in physical appearance and social significance like the thousands of other communities that dot the rice fields of the great Central Plain.

To what extent Bang Chan may be considered "typical" in an analytic sense of other villages of the Menam Valley, or even of the country as a

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

423 184 from Bang Chan, the figure is as high as 85 percent (Dobby 1950). In these terms, therefore, it is best to view the incidence of land tenancy in Bang Chan as largely a function of local, historical circumstances.

369 179 A final word should be said about Bang Chan's proximity and accessibility to Bangkok—the cornucopia of so much that is new, interesting, and desirable (if somewhat equivocally) to most Siamese peasants. It is clear that Bang Chan's closeness to the capital creates certain conditions that would not be present in a community situated, for example, 200 kilometers, instead of 31 kilometers, from the nation's largest city. Simply on practical grounds, this nearness to the city permits the villagers to take advantage of opportunities—economic, recreational, and religious—which those living in distant provinces can obtain only after serious consideration of the financial and psychological expenses involved: "Do I have shoes to wear in the city? Do they treat people from the provinces well? With whom will I stay? Do I have the train fare?" A Bang Chaner who visits the capital [494] does not have to make such financial or emotional commitments, since it is only a one hour, three and one-half baht (seventeen and one-half cents) bus ride back home, although many do share with their up-country cousins the peasant's apprehensions about city manners.

The attractions of Bangkok take several forms: off-season jobs, medical care, kinship ties, special schools, great market places, famed monasteries or fairs, and the many other places where one can go to have fun. A survey [484] conducted in Bang Chan during 1955 (Goldsen and Ralis 1957) indicates that 62 percent of all household heads in the village visited Bangkok more than twice during the year for just such purposes. (Twenty-one percent had not gone to Bangkok at all, and 23 percent had gone more than ten times.) Many villagers, particularly younger men, attracted by the promise 369 179 of regular wages, lighter work, and the bright lights of the city, leave Bang 169 Chan with the hope that they will never have to return, although of course [464] many do. The Goldsen-Ralis survey reveals that 26 percent of their re- [701] spondents had lived in Bangkok for a year or more, although for most this was in fulfillment of military service.

369 179 181 Living in Bangkok is not something that is desired in and of itself. Bang Chaners are keenly aware of the disadvantages of city living—particularly its great expense and insecurity—and are impressed only by those individuals who have made a success out of their urban sojourn. Most would agree that a Bangkok coolie, for all his exposure to the wonders of the modern world, lives a considerably less attractive life than they do.

369 179 The frequent transit between Bang Chan and Bangkok,[8] however,

[809] [204] [891] [8] Of less practical consequence than their direct personal experiences and word-of-mouth contacts, but not to be ignored, are the villagers' contacts with Bangkok by way of radio, newspapers, books, and of course by way of what their children bring